

February 27, 2005

Freedom Watch

Combined Joint Task Force - Afghanistan



*Military Police
dogs get new
protective vests*

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Air Force Staff Sgt. Jennifer Lindsey

Fix 'er up

Air Force Staff Sgt. Franklin J. Newbery (left), 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief teaches Air Force Col. Derrick A. Hoxie III, Air Component Coordination Element deputy director, how to take oil samples from an A-10 Thunderbolt II. Newbery and Hoxie participated in the Crew Chief for a Day program, which offered deployed Airmen of all Air Force career fields the opportunity to experience what it is like to work on jets.

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Sgt. 1st Class Erika Gordon, 58th MP Co. kennel master, runs with her dog, Hanna, during a training exercise at the Bagram Airfield Military Operations on Urban Terrain site Feb 4. Units like Gordon's at Bagram and Kandahar Airfield recently received Kevlar vests for their military working dogs. The handlers have been working with the dogs to acclimate them to the vests.

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Freedom Watch

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Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Mack Davis

Above: 2nd Kandak, 3rd Brigade, ANA Soldiers stand in formation after ascending Chaperi mountain in search of plane wreckage from the Feb. 4 Kam Air crash.

Left: ANA armored personnel carrier crew members await word to depart the base camp and head for the Kam Air 737-200 plane crash site. The ANA were called up to support a rescue attempt for survivors of the plane crash.

ANA soldiers lend hand in search for plane

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Mack Davis
and Maj. Eric Bloom

Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan
and Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Feb. 4 crash of a Kam Air Boeing 737-200 was the worst air disaster to occur in Afghanistan. The International Security Assistance Force made numerous, unsuccessful rescue attempts by helicopter. When technology fails, it takes boots on the ground to get the job done.

Because Afghanistan has about 18,600 pairs of boots on the ground with its ever growing Afghan National Army, Afghanistan was able to call on the ANA to accomplish the mission.

Following the crash of the Kam Air plane carrying 104 people, the Ministry of Defense ordered the Central Corps of the Afghan National Army to assemble a team and attempt a rescue of the people presumed to be alive.

The crash site was at an altitude of 11,000 feet on the peak of the Chaperi mountain 20 miles east of Kabul. Attempts by ISAF to fly to the scene were hampered due to weather.

The mission assigned to the ANA was to traverse the opposite side of Chaperi from the crash site to attempt to reach the summit and locate any survivors.

At Pol-e-Charki, where the ANA's Central Corps soldiers are based, ANA Lt. Col. Kabuly Qadeer, 2nd Kandak (battalion), 3rd Brigade, commander,

quickly gathered his soldiers. They mounted their vehicles and prepared to head to Chenari village at the base of the mountain.

Alongside the ANA were their U.S. Embedded Tactical Trainers. The team's commander, Lt. Col. Gordon Johnson Jr., South Carolina National Guard, said their mission was to support the ANA in any situation that developed.

The ANA rapidly responded to the order and headed for the base of the Chaperi mountain. There, the 2nd Kandak and their U.S. advisors set up a command center to coordinate between ISAF and the Central Corps headquarters at Pol-e-Charki.

First, the ANA set up two check points leading into the area to limit the number of people around the crash site.

Next, Qadeer, 40 of his ANA soldiers and an elder from the village acting as a guide, climbed aboard an armored personnel carrier to head for the crash site. Qadeer, a seasoned mountain fighter, was familiar with the terrain.

The team departed the base camp around 1 p.m. on the first day of the rescue attempt. The ANA soldiers, without any type of special climbing gear, climbed halfway up the mountain by dusk, even in the difficult weather.

The Afghan soldiers had to halt operations due to another snow storm, but were able to find a cave to hunker down in for the night.

Qadeer returned to the command center

and discussed the next day's plan with Johnson.

Packed and ready to go the next morning, the team departed the base camp with fresh clothes, extra food and water.

The Soldiers began to continually probe the snow with climbing sticks in hopes of finding some remnants of the wreckage. Because the snow was over chest high and the ANA was not equipped with any type of global positioning devices, locating the main crash site was difficult for them.

ISAF was able to get an aircraft up with a team of Slovenian mountain rescue members who located the site and determined that no one had survived the crash.

Due to severe weather, the ISAF members had to leave the mountain in order to avoid being caught in the adverse conditions.

The ANA Soldiers were able to make it back ahead of the storm, bringing with them valuable information needed for the recovery of victims.

"The speed and audacity in which the ANA operated on this mission would be impressive to any nation's army," said Johnson.

"The people of Afghanistan are proud of you!" said Qadeer to the soldiers of the 2nd Kandak. "You were given a mission to deploy, set up check points, set up a command center, and climb to the crash site to support a rescue mission, and you completed the mission. I thank you all."

FOB Tiger medics treat TK villagers

Story and photos by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE TIGER, Afghanistan — Cpl. Howard Bushey doesn't know very much Pashtu or Dari, but he does his best, mostly through sign language, to explain to a local villager how to use the eye drops he has given him.

Bushey, from Headquarters Support Company, 528th Engineer Battalion, is one of a few medics serving at Forward Operating Base Tiger. He takes turns going to the Tarin Kowt road construction site where his primary mission is to provide medical support to the engineers and security forces working on the project.

However, he and the rest of the medical personnel at the base have found themselves with an additional mission — providing healthcare to villagers living near the road project.

"The first few times we were on the road it was pretty quiet," said Bushey. "But slowly I think word got around that we were out here and we could help. We've been treating people ever since."

Bushey and a combat lifesaver from one of the units here usually convoy out to the construction site together and often just park their front-line ambulance near the road. Within minutes, the villagers appear.

"I try to come out at least once a week or whenever they let me," said Cpl. Nicole



Above: Cpl. Howard Bushey, HSC, 528th Eng. Bn., combat medic, and Cpl. Nicole Elder, Co. B, 204th Eng. Bn., combat life saver, pull medical supplies from Bushey's medical bag. Left: Bushey and Elder work together to bandage a young villager's hand near the Tarin Kowt road construction project Feb. 1.

Elder, Co. B, 204th Eng. Bn., administrative assistant and certified combat life saver.

"Being able to come here and help out has definitely strengthened my CLS skills, but it's also allowed me to do something good for the people here," she said.

Together, the two have treated their share of cuts, skin infections, diarrhea and burns. This working relationship is proving to be

beneficial to everyone involved.

"Use your combat lifesavers," said Bushey. "You can't be everywhere all the time. Good CLS's can make your job easier."

As a CLS, Elder also helps the on-site medic dispense vitamins and pain relievers, retrieve medical supplies, take blood pressure readings, and bandage wounds.

Sometimes, Dr. Nasir, a local physician, also lends a hand. He speaks English and helps the medics communicate with patients whenever a translator is not available.

"We have very little access to healthcare here," said Nasir. "The people need medicine, and they will come out here because they know we will help them."

The majority of patients who come to the ambulance are children, and thanks to Elder's presence, women and girls.

"We've been able to treat women, and that makes us feel good to be able to help them out as well — to give them something, too," she said.

In addition to the medical support they provide for the road project, the medics also man the FOB Tiger aid station 24 hours a day and conduct sick call for U.S. Soldiers and Afghan National Army troops.

"I'm really proud of not only the road, but the medical treatment we've been able to provide out here for the residents," said Bushey. "Being on this deployment has made me a better medic."



Cpl. Nicole Elder, Co. B, 204th Eng. Bn., combat life saver, assists Dr. Nasir, a local physician, as he cleans a villager's infected leg wound outside Forward Operating Base Tiger.

'Soldier Appreciation Day' recognized at FOB Tiger

Story and photos by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE TIGER, Afghanistan — Soldiers from Task Force Golden Eagle found a unique way to boost morale among the troops serving here, holding its first "Soldier Appreciation Day" last month.

Leaders said they wanted to give the Soldiers serving at Forward Operating Base Tiger a much-needed break from everyday operations and extend their appreciation to all of the units for their ongoing work.

"The soldiers have worked hard during this deployment," said TF Golden Eagle 1st Sgt. Craig Perkins, Company B, 204th Engineer Battalion.

"This is one way that we can say thank you to them for their efforts. They've gone above and beyond," he said.

Indeed, the Soldiers of TF Golden Eagle have had their hands full during their time here and will certainly be remembered for their long-term contributions to Afghanistan.

The units here have not only worked continuously on the Tarin Kowt road construction project, but they've

also constructed FOB Tiger from the ground up and conducted daily security patrols throughout the area.

With all the work they've done, it was time for a break.

"It feels good to get out and get some exercise, have some fun, and just relax for a little while," said Spc. Sean Schreiner, Co. B, 204th Eng. Bn. "Everybody's out here cheering and having a good time. We know that we can't let our guard down com-



Sgt. Angel Cruz, Co. B, 204th Eng. Bn., stands on the sidelines as he waits to go into the game. Cruz played defensive back for his team.



Soldiers from the 528th and 204th Eng. Bns. square off during the "Tiger Bowl" football game.

pletely, but we still want to take a break from our everyday missions sometimes."

The highlight of the day was the "Tiger Bowl" football game. Soldiers from Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, and the 528th and 204th Eng. Bns. battled it out for bragging rights and a

See Thanks, Page 14

Enduring Voices

What are you most looking forward to upon redeployment?



1st Lt. Brook Wilson
HHC, JTF Wings
"Surfing."



Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Kinard
3rd Quartermaster Det.
"Being back with my wife and kids."



Spc. Greig Peter
652nd Eng. Det.
"A little more free time and relaxation."



Marine Gunnery Sgt. Joseph Yantosca
3rd Bn., 3rd Marines
"Spending quality time with my wife and kids."



Coalition doctors, medics work together to save lives

Story and photo by
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

Navy Dr. (Capt.) Jose Acosta (left) and Dr. (Maj.) Lance Smith, 325th CSH, remove the dead skin from an Afghan boy's back at Kandahar Airfield. Medical professionals work together and share knowledge to improve medical care throughout Afghanistan.

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Knowledge is one of the greatest assets one can pass on to another, especially in a field like medicine.

At Kandahar Airfield, the medical personnel aren't just passing it on to other U.S. service members, they are passing their knowledge on to Afghan

National Army medics, ensuring they can take care of their own soldiers instead of relying on Coalition forces' assistance.

"Right now, we're here to help the ANA," said Dr. (Maj.) Lance Smith, 325th Combat Support Hospital – Kandahar Airfield. "But we're working on the long term."

Long term includes teaching the follow-on care that is critical to recovery.

The medical staff instructs the families of patients, interpreters and other medics in the proper way to care for patients after they leave the hospital. Without proper care, patients run the risk of infection,

which can be life-threatening, especially for children.

When ANA 1st Sgt. Abdul Hai brought his 1-year-old son to Kandahar with third degree burns over 11 percent of his body,

See Medical, Page 14

Religious Services Around the CJOA

Kabul

Sunday

0630 - Christian Worship Service
1030 - Christian Worship Service (U.S. Embassy Marine Lounge)
1430 - Christian Worship Service
1530 - Small Group Study 301
1600 - Small Group Study 201

Tuesday

1530 - Small Group Study 301

Wednesday

1430 - Small Group Study 401

Friday

0830 - Latter-Day Saints
1330 - Small Group Study 101
1430 - Coffee House Ministry

Saturday

1130 - Catholic Mass

** All times
Zulu/GMT*

Camp Phoenix

Sunday

0430 - Catholic (Italian)
0530 - Non-Denominational Prot.
1330 - Catholic (French)
1530 - Non-Denominational Prot.

Tuesday

1430 - Bible Study

Wednesday

1430 - Gospel Bible Study

Saturday

1430 - Gospel Worship Service

FOB Salerno

Sunday

0300 - Foundations Bible Class
0400 - Traditional Prot. Worship
0530 - Catholic Mass
0730 - Latter-Day Saints
0830 - Gospel Service
1400 - Inspirational Movie Night

Saturday

1500 - Contemporary Prot.

Bagram Airfield

Sunday

0400 - Liturgical Prot.
0530 - Roman Catholic Mass
0830 - Latter-Day Saints
0700 - Traditional Prot.
1115 - Korean Language Prot.
1300 - Gospel Service

Monday

1400 - Gospel Choir Rehearsal

Tuesday

1400 - Gospel Bible Study
1545 - Prot. Music Rehearsal

Wednesday

1600 - Catholic Music Rehearsal

Thursday

1430 - Gospel Choir Rehearsal

Friday

1430 - Jewish Prayer
1500 - Women's Bible Study

Saturday

0500 - Seventh-Day Adventist
1330 - Korean Choir Rehearsal
1515 - Roman Catholic Mass
1630 - Prot. Choir Rehearsal
Daily, Monday-Friday
0700 - Roman Catholic Mass
0745 - Noon-Day prayer

Kandahar Airfield

Sunday

0430 - Catholic Mass
0500 - Bible Study (325th FSB)
0630 - Prot. Worship
1330 - Gospel Choir Practice
1400 - Sunday School
1530 - Gospel Service

Monday

1300 - Gospel Choir Practice

Tuesday

1430 - Purpose-driven Life Study
1300 - Gospel Choir Practice
1430 - Praise Team Practice
1530 - Bible Study

Wednesday

1300 - Gospel Choir Practice
1430 - Praise Team Practice
1500 - Latter-Day Saints

Friday

0830 - Islamic Prayers
1330 - Jewish Sabbath Prayers

Saturday

0400 - Men's Breakfast
1300 - Catholic Mass
1430 - Praise Team Practice
Daily, Monday-Friday
0330 - Catholic Mass

In good hands: TF 168 secures conference

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Combined Task Force Thunder Public Affairs

JALALABAD, Afghanistan — The governors of three Afghan provinces, the deputy governor of another, and a host of Coalition leaders all gathered to discuss the future development of the region — an enticing engagement for anti-Coalition militants looking for a seemingly easy target.

But to get to the conference they would have had to get past the Soldiers of Company A, Task Force 168.

The company, members of the Iowa National Guard, which regularly provides force protection for the Jalalabad Provincial Reconstruction Team, was out in force to ensure nothing went wrong at the conference.

The mission in Jalalabad is successful, and because of that, they often receive visitors and high-ranking officials. The company has provided protection for the likes of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, said 1st Lt. Colin Nevin, a platoon leader for Co. A.

"We've been doing it so long, it's pretty reflexive," said Nevin. "It's like second nature."

Sitting behind a machine gun or patrolling for days at a time when nothing happens can become monotonous, though.

To battle complacency, the unit relies on pre-combat inspections and leadership from the NCOs, said Nevin.

"I'm very lucky to lead very intelligent and experienced Soldiers," he said.



Sgt. Jacob Pries, a team leader with Co. A, TF 168, patrols a garden outside the governors conference in Jalalabad Feb. 2.

"We have a really good working relationship, and I'm just fortunate to be leading them."

Spc. Wesley Zollman, an infantryman in Co. A, said although their job often seems thankless, he's proud to do it.

"You get to see the changes that are being made, in part, because we're providing protection for everybody else," he said as he sat in the gun turret of a high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle with a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on top.

Should anything get through the police checkpoint at the end of the street, Zollman was the next line of defense.

The company did not have to go it alone at the conference. They were augmented by numerous Afghan policemen

and security forces.

The company tries to include Afghan forces in their operations whenever possible, said Nevin.

"The end state is where the Afghans can do everything for themselves," he said. "We're trying to train them and empower them."

The overall goal for the conference was to provide security so those inside the conference could do what they came to do, without having to worry about what was going on outside, said Nevin.

After two days, the conference concluded without incident. The governors went back to their respective provinces and all the conference attendees went home safely, passing by the vigilant Soldiers of Co. A on their way out.

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Afghan National Army soldiers pause on an outcrop as they secure an ammunition cache near Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan. Almost 19,000 soldiers now serve in the ANA, with another 3,400 undergoing basic training. Permanent corps now stand in the four regions of Afghanistan — North (Mazar-e-Sharif), South (Kandahar), East (Gardez) and West (Herat), and in Kabul.

Photo by British Army Lt. Col. Andy Fenton

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to stumpc@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.



Canine units issued new protective gear

Bagram, Kandahar dog teams receive bullet-proof vests

Story and photos by
Spc. Cheryl Ransford
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Maintaining safety in a combat zone is a matter of more than just situational awareness. It's a matter of protecting yourself from unforeseen dangers.

But what happens when "yourself" is man's best friend?

When K-9 handlers of the 25th Military Police Company conduct extraction missions and area searches, their highly trained K-9s often serve as the main tool for finding weapons and people in hiding.

To counteract the additional dangers these dogs face in the line of duty, their equipment has been upgraded.

For the past month, several K-9 teams

across Afghanistan have been using K-9 Storm ballistic vests.

"These new vests are an upgrade from the current vests the dogs have been using," said Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Thomas, 25th MP Co. assistant kennel master. "Before, the vests were only stab proof, which worked well for missions in the States. However, with the additional dangers these dogs are facing during this deployment, they are now wearing vests that are not only stab proof, but also bullet proof."

Although the new vests are slightly heavier than the vests the dogs previously used, neither their mobility nor their mission have been hindered by their use.

"When the dogs are conducting missions that require them to use the new vests, they are in areas that could possibly cause them to be injured or killed," said Thomas. "They are the first one into the area looking for people or weapons. They help us find the things we can't see."

The vests are currently being used by the K-9 units at Bagram Airfield and Kandahar Airfield, said Sgt. 1st Class Erika Gordon, 25th MP Co. kennel master.

"Even though we only have a few vests at the moment, we are working to get vests for every dog in Afghanistan," she said. "These vests are the dogs' only means of protection. They go in before their handler. It is a matter of 'get them before they get you.' That's why these vests are so important."

The vests are also able to carry all of the dogs' gear, which includes heating or cooling packs.

"These vests make us more versatile in



Sgt. 1st Class Erika Gordon, 25th MP Co. kennel master, uses a building for cover while her military working dog, Hanna, clears a doorway at Bagram Airfield's Military Operations on Urban Terrain site Feb 4.



Sgt. Danny Rogers, 25th MP Co. dog handler, is "attacked" by Jordon, a military working dog, during a training exercise at the Bagram MOUT site.

what we can do with the dogs," said Gordon.

"Many people may say 'They're just dogs, why do they need that kind of equipment?' But these dogs are a part of a team and need to be protected just as much as every member of every other team in country," said Thomas.

"These dogs are our partners. We travel with them, sleep with them and live with them. They are our best friends. Every dog handler will agree that there is nothing we won't do to protect our dogs."

FA Soldiers conduct gunner's qualification

Story and photos by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE TIGER, Afghanistan — Soldiers from Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, serving at Forward Operating Base Tiger, are putting their artillery skills to the test, literally.

Several Soldiers from the battery took their gunner's test, a comprehensive 13-part exam that artillery Soldiers in grades E-4 and E-5 must pass to receive their certification on the M-119 A2 howitzer.

During the test, participants react to a series of simulated fire missions and tasks sent down from the fire direction center. They calculate where and when to direct fire and aim their guns accordingly.

Soldiers can score anywhere from 30 to 52 points and rank as Gunner Second Class, Gunner First Class, or Expert.

This is not the first time the battery has conducted a gunner's test during their deployment here, but leaders hope that by testing their Soldiers now, it will further increase the unit's combat readiness.

"We're doing this now so that when we redeploy back to Schofield, we'll already be re-certified," said Sergeant 1st Class William Coleman, Btry. C gunnery sergeant.

"This test is all about basic gunnery skills," he said. "All of our Soldiers and cannon crewmembers have to have the basics down. It's the foundation of field artillery."

The gunner's test is hands-on and participants are timed as they work to complete each assigned task, from firing their howitzer while donning a protective mask, to using a compass to correctly lay their gun on the correct azimuth of fire. The test requires close attention to detail and can be a bit intimidating, especially for artillery Soldiers like Spc. Audie Murphy who took his gunner's test for the first time.

"I was a little nervous, but we've all been practicing on the howitzer for the last couple of days," said Murphy.

"The section chiefs explained everything that was going to happen and talked to us before we came out here," he said.

Others who took the test in the past and recently completed it again understand its importance.

"This insures that you're technically proficient in a combat environment," said Spc. Bradley Cannon, Btry. C gunner.

"We have a lot of mixed missions," he said. "Anyone may have to step up at any time and fill a different role."

"We support the infantry and if they call for fire, we have to be directly on target. There's zero tolerance for mistakes in field artillery."

Section chiefs like Staff Sgt. Raymond Franklin Jr., Btry. C howitzer section chief, are helping to reinforce this attitude.

"I just went over a lot of the tasks with my guys so they could get the feel of it, especially those who had never done it before," said Franklin.

As a section chief, Franklin is responsible for receiving all of the information coming from the fire direction center and relaying it to the gunner during his exam. He must also verify the gunner's final data before any rounds can be fired.

"This is another way that we as artillery Soldiers can keep up with our gunnery skills," said Franklin. "This test helps to point out the areas an individual may need to fine-tune or strengthen."

His advice for future Soldiers preparing to take their gunner's test is "take your time and do it right, follow the proper procedures, know your Field Manual 6-50, and the speed will come."

Once the gunners are certified, each

section will test for their section certification and, finally, the battery itself.

The gunner's test is given every six months for all artillery Soldiers. If a Soldier does not pass it, he will retrain and wait until it is given again.



Above: Staff Sgt. Raymond Franklin Jr. and Spc. Larry Davis, both of Btry. C, 3rd Bn., 7th FA Rgt., review Davis' test scores from his gunner's test at FOB Tiger on Jan. 28.

Top: Sgt. Miguel Puga, Btry. C, 3rd Bn., 7th FA Rgt., gunner, looks through the site on his M-119 A2 howitzer during his gunner's test.

Security Forces: *Airmen swear to defend brothers, sisters in arms*

Story and photos by
Air Force Capt. Catie Hague
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — “I am my brothers’ and sisters’ keeper” ... words the 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron at Bagram Airfield live by and, if need be, swear to die by.

“We focus on mission, safety and the welfare of our Airmen,” said Air Force Master Sgt. Adam Barber, 455th ESFS operations superintendent. “It’s a 24-hour job, seven days a week, and it involves quite a bit more than most people realize - we are not just gate guards and flightline badge producers.”

The Air Force’s security forces team is an essential part of Bagram’s Integrated Base Defense, led by the U.S. Army.

“We are tasked to provide total security for about two-and-a-half miles of flightline covered with fixed- and rotary-wing

aircraft,” said Air Force Capt. David Lydon, 455th ESFS commander. “We’re the core, because we’re positioned where the assets are.”

With a team of both active duty and Reserve, the ESFS “makes sure the right people are in the right place, doing the right thing,” said Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Nate Huven, 455th ESFS operations officer.

“Our team enforces this concept in every area of responsibility,” he said.

In addition to mobile patrols and post-ed sentries at key locations along the flightline, members of the ESFS here maintain the security forces control center, manage the Air Force’s ammunition supply and security forces’ vehicle fleet, as well as disseminate intelligence, process incoming and outgoing personnel and provide off-base security when needed.

“As part of the vulnerability assessment team, we look for deficiencies in physical security,” said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jeff Olsen, 455th ESFS anti-terrorism/force protection noncommissioned officer in charge. “We do sweeps of the area, walk the fence and look for breaks in the line.

“My team is the best,” he said. Olsen’s team, including Air Force Senior Airman Adam Belcher and Air Force Airman 1st Class Nate Lowrey, “knows how to locate discrepancies, find a way to fix them, and get it done.”

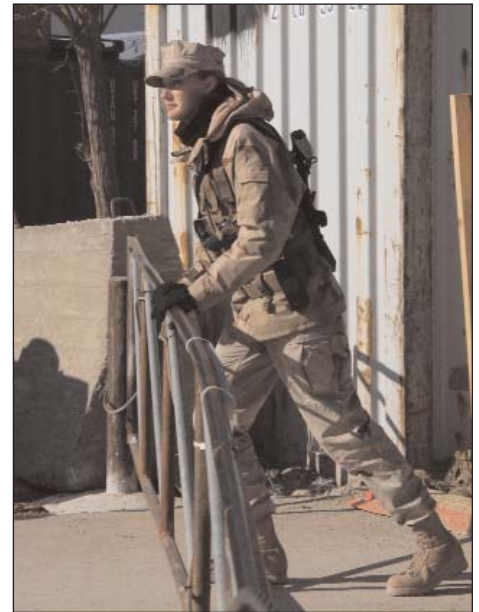
Two-thirds of ESFS voluntarily work special teams known as tactical security elements, putting themselves in harm’s way to carry out operations “outside the wire.”

“Some of us are part of the rocket attack team,” said Lowrey. “We provide security for off-base, post-attack reconnaissance - going out to the location where we think the rocket was launched and conducting counterintelligence and human intelligence.”

Other security force members support the Office of Special Investigations.

“Every time OSI goes off base to investigate something, we volunteer our off-duty time to act as personal security while they carry out their mission,” said Air Force Master Sgt. Robert Nolen, 455th ESFS administrator and patrolmaster.

“Basically, we’ve got a fantastic team,”



Air Force Airman 1st Class Melissa Osterbaan, 455th ESFS entry controller, secures the busiest entry control point to the flightline on Bagram Airfield.

said Huven. “Many of us never knew each other before we got here. We’re from nine different bases. But the troops have truly come together as ‘One Team’ for the mission.”

Security forces generally deploy on six-month rotations. The current ESFS has been here for about five months.

“As the squadron commander, I’ve been fortunate to have such highly-trained, experienced people with me on this deployment,” said Lydon. “They’ve made my job easy.

“Every once in a while, I have to put things into perspective,” he said. “We’re here to defend the airfield and our Airmen. When everything remains safe, sometimes the troops feel like they’re not a part of what’s going on. They can’t go home after work, point to something and say, ‘I made that, or I fixed that.’ Security is a concept, and the finished product is rarely noticed unless it’s failed in some way.”

But it’s a concept the Airmen are fine with.

“We are a weapon available for our leadership’s use when and if needed,” said Lydon. “And it’s my job to remind the troops that the airfield, the aircraft and the people are safe because they are here.”



Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Olsen, 455th ESFS intelligence and anti terrorism/force protection noncommissioned officer in charge, checks the fence on Bagram Airfield for vulnerabilities.



Spc. Johnny R. Aragon



Spc. Harold Fields

Above: A Soldier has the advantage of a high mountain look-out point as he searches for the enemy below in Ganjgal in eastern Afghanistan.

Left: An Afghan girl looks on as Coalition members move through eastern Afghanistan's Khowst-Gardez pass.

ENDURING IMAGES

Combat Camera's lenses capture activities of Coalition around CJOA



Spc. Harold Fields

Above: A Soldier from the Asadabad PRT in eastern Afghanistan greets an Afghan National Policeman during a security mission. PRTs throughout Afghanistan often work with the local police to provide better security in their areas.

Right: A Soldier peers out the back of a cargo vehicle while on a mounted presence patrol through Asadabad in eastern Afghanistan. Presence patrols are used to deter enemies and show the local population the Coalition is there to help.



Spc. Harold Fields

Soldiers from the 68th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) pull security at Kabul International Airport.



Spc. Harold Fields

S.A.F.D.

Shindand fire fighters remain ready for action

Story and photos by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

SHINDAND AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — For most service members participating in Operation Enduring Freedom, the deployment represents an extended period to grow in their military occupational specialties.

For a small group of Soldiers deployed with the 221st Ordnance Company, U.S. Army Reserve, Afghanistan has become a path toward not only becoming a better Soldier, but ultimately a more experienced fire fighter.

Charged with the task of emergency response, as well as overall fire prevention on Shindand Airfield, the eight-person unit functions much like a local fire department in a small community in the United States. Standing ready to respond to many different situations, individuals on the team tap into prior experience to enhance their mission here.

On Shindand Airfield, the need for emergency response revolves around the many aircraft conducting missions here. With many service members working around flammable and explosive materials, the key for emergency response is quick reaction.

"We are ready to go at a moment's notice, because the difference of a few minutes in our response time can mean



Members of the Shindand Airfield Fire Department test their truck's hose on the flight line.

the difference between life and death," said Sgt. Anthony Zamora, SAFD fireman.

Zamora has more than six years' experience as an Army fire fighter. Using the experience he gained in the Army, he also works as a civilian fire fighter. After serving in both capacities, he said the experience from one always enhances the other.

"There is not much difference to what we do here and what is done at many other fire departments," said Zamora. "The essence of what we do remains the same."

Zamora is not the only one with lots of experience. In fact, just about every person working in the Shindand Airfield Fire Department is a part of a fire department in the United States.

Staff Sgt. Jessica Reich, SAFD non-commissioned officer in charge, graduated from the fire academy and worked for a local fire department in Fort Wayne, Ind., before she was activated for Operation

Enduring Freedom.

She said the experience she is gaining in Afghanistan is helping her greatly in becoming a better fire fighter.

"In a lot of areas we are starting from scratch in terms of fire prevention," said Reich.

Because Shindand was only recently established as a Coalition base, the fire department was able to start from square one in terms of fire prevention. This new situation was a golden opportunity for Reich and her team to use their knowledge to keep everyone on base safe.

"We knew coming in here every living and work area needed our attention in terms of fire prevention," she said.

From smoke detectors to fire extinguishers to prevention training, the firemen have worked their way around the base.

"This was a great opportunity to use what I was taught not only by the Army, but in the fire academy," said Reich. "What I have learned here will also come in handy when I return back home."

While the situation seems win-win in terms of experience for the fire fighters and Coalition forces in Afghanistan, Spc. Matthew Harding said the deployment is mostly important because he gets to use his best skills while serving what he considers a very important cause — OEF.

"Serving my country as a fireman is a very rewarding experience," he said.



Spc. Rob Golden, Shindand Airfield Fire Department, returns his fire truck to the fire station following a drill on Shindand Airfield. Golden and the rest of the fire crew serve as Shindand's emergency response.

Weapons safety part of operational culture

Safeguarding the Coalition

Story and photo by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

AFGHANISTAN — Most negligent weapons discharges that occur throughout Afghanistan are due to a Soldier's lack of experience handling his assigned weapon and live ammunition on a daily basis.

Two Soldiers died last year as a result.

Statistics from the Combined Joint Task Force-76 Safety Office show that when new units rotate in, the rate of negligent discharges increases exponentially.

"When most of the units initially arrived here last year, there was a rash of negligent discharges," said Master Sgt. Steve Vandersande, CJTF-76 Safety Office non-commissioned officer in charge. "There were more negligent discharges during the initial stages of the deployment than any other times throughout the year."

During the major troop rotation at this time last year, there were 20 documented cases of negligent discharges within the combined/joint operations area, said Vandersande. Of those 20, two resulted in fatalities and eight resulted in injuries.

The high number of negligent discharges can be linked to any number of reasons relating to inexperience, but the primary reason for negligent discharges is pinpointed to one key component — lack of leader supervision.

"It was when we saw NCOs getting involved that the numbers of (negligent discharges) went down dramatically," said Vandersande.

From weapons clearing procedures to muzzle awareness, there are many established methods every service member must use to remain safe. However, none of these procedures work without situational awareness, he said.

"It is not just muzzle awareness," said Vandersande. "It is every Soldier constantly knowing the status of their weapon."

"The best way to do this is through the first-line supervisor," he said.

This message rings true with team leaders like Spc. Daniel Jensen, 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment.

Jensen said weapons safety is one of his primary concerns as an infantry team leader.

"The last thing you would want to do is have a guy get hurt just because they were negligent with a weapon," he said.

Jensen said one of the most important things he does to prevent negligent discharges is to keep his eyes on his Soldiers' weapons each time they conduct clearing procedures.

"I watch each of my guys drop their magazines and eject a round," he said. "I then visually inspect each chamber to ensure they are clear."

Jensen said he stays acutely aware of the position of his muzzle, as well as that of every person in his squad.

In addition, Jensen said he also conducts random visual inspections on each of his Soldiers' weapons to ensure the selector switch is on safe.

"In our unit, we really concentrate on safety," he said. "By constantly checking my Soldiers' weapons, they will stay more aware."

The importance of weapons safety within Jensen's unit has been raised so high that even the lowest ranking person feels confident in making a correction.

While Jensen and his unit have been operating in a combat role for more than 10 months, the concern still remains with the new service members rotating into theater.

One unit that has just arrived in support of Operation Enduring Freedom is the 716th Military Police Battalion, part of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky.

Weapon's safety was one of the most important tasks the unit addressed as part of their deployment into theater, said Staff Sgt. Savath Kilburn, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 716th MP Bn.

"Our unit commander and first sergeant both constantly preach weapons safety," said Kilburn.

A deployment veteran, Kilburn said she



Cpl. Jay Diaz (left) checks the chamber of Spc. Bertram Johnson's weapon before ending his guard shift. Both Soldiers are from 2nd Bn., 265th Air Defense Artillery Rgt., Forward 5, and always practice safe clearing procedures with leader supervision.

realized how much of an adjustment it can be for inexperienced Soldiers coming into a combat theater for the first time.

"During the initial phases of the deployment, I took nothing for granted when it came to my Soldiers and their weapons," she said. "I used every opportunity to remind my Soldiers of the proper rules and regulations of weapons safety."

The Soldiers in Kilburn's unit have yet to initiate a negligent discharge. The key to having this statement remain true throughout the unit's year-long deployment is to keep the same intensity her unit arrived with, she said.

Accepting weapons safety and discipline as a part of the culture in Operation Enduring Freedom is a constant for each individual, whether they are at the beginning of the deployment or one day from leaving.

Thanks: Leaders boost Soldier moral with fun day

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shot at the Tiger Bowl trophy.

The final game ended with a draw between 3rd Bn., 7th FA Rgt., and the 204th Eng. Bn. Regardless of who won, Soldiers both on and off the football field welcomed their free day.

"We don't get many days off, so to have something like this is special and a big morale booster for everybody," said Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Johnson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 528th Eng. Bn.

"It's especially good for the young Soldiers," he said. "They've seen a lot and done a lot here. They've had to accept more responsibility and adjust to several changes."

After a relaxing day of playing football and taking advantage of some much-needed downtime, Soldier Appreciation Day concluded with a base-wide barbecue.

Noncommissioned officers and commissioned officers throughout the base took turns cooking and serving up a feast of buttered lobster tails, hot dogs, hamburg-

ers and ice cream.

"I'm having a good time," said Sgt. Daniel Sanchez, Btry. C gunner.

"We have good food and we get to play football and do some of the things we would normally do back home to relax," he said. "This eased some of the everyday stress here."

It was all about giving the Soldiers a break and improving well-being.

"Happy Soldiers are productive Soldiers," said Perkins. "It's all about morale."

Medical: Knowledge shared between U.S., Afghan doctors, medics

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ANA medic Gul Nawaz was on hand to learn exactly how he would need to treat the boy after he left the hospital.

"After he leaves the hospital, I will do everything I have learned here," said Nawaz.

This includes changing the dressings on the burns, giving medication, monitoring vital signs and checking for infection.

In addition to taking care of Hai's son, Nawaz is also better-prepared to take care of his fellow soldiers. That's a point that reassures Hai, knowing his troops will

remain ready to defend Afghanistan.

"He will be able to take care of our soldiers," said Hai of Nawaz. "This is important to our country."

But Nawaz isn't the only Afghan learning from the Coalition. The interpreters who work at the hospital are also learning how to treat patients.

"I have been working with the Coalition for nearly three years," said Ahamad Ullah Faizi, an interpreter for the hospital.

This helps Faizi in his other job as a principal at a local school.

"I am able to talk to my students when they are sick, and I can find out what is

wrong with them," he said. With that knowledge, Faizi is able to help his students and their families find treatment for their ailments and injuries.

Everyone working in the hospital knows the importance of passing on their knowledge, and takes the time to do what they can to help.

"What we're doing here is crucial to the people of Afghanistan and the patients," said Staff Sgt. Alesia Rice, a 325th CSH licensed practical nurse. "The Afghan people ... just need someone to teach them. We're here helping everybody, and in turn, they can help their own."

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



Dari

Are you hungry?

Aya shuma gurisna hasted?

(Eye-yah shoo-mah goor-ees-nah hah-stayed)

Pashtu

Are you hungry?

Taso wazha ye?

(Tah-soh wah-ja yay)

Afghan cultural tidbit

Afghan men typically wear a long tunic over baggy trousers and often wear a vest over the tunic. Turbans are wound around a type of turban cap. Pashtuns and others who imitate them leave a couple of feet of turban cloth hanging down, while most of those in the rest of the country tuck the end in. Pashtun men customarily have their hair cut square at ear-lobe length. Other groups have their heads shaved about once a month.

Guardisman shares knowledge in Asadabad

Story and photos by
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

ASADABAD PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan — Sgt. Bryan D. McCarty has spent his entire life working around construction sites, something that is helping him accomplish his mission of base improvement in Afghanistan.

McCarty serves as the facility engineer at eastern Afghanistan's Asadabad Provincial Reconstruction Team, where he oversees every construction project that takes place.

While McCarty is Army-trained as a supply sergeant, he was nominated for the facility engineer assignment based on his extensive civilian knowledge of construction.

"All I've done since I've been here is construction," said McCarty.

This construction includes building permanent barracks, latrines and guard towers at the remote firebase near the Pakistan border.

Back in his hometown of Three Oaks, Mich., McCarty and his father own a general contracting business. Most of their projects are houses, along with the occasional commercial job.

Many of the projects in Asadabad have similar construction requirements, so McCarty's civilian-acquired skills come in handy.

Most of the construction work is completed by local contractors, but McCarty supervises and gives advice as it's needed.

"The workers won't let me do things," he said. "But if I see something they could be doing more efficiently or differently, I will stop them and show them the alternative."

McCarty also takes the time to train his coworker, Sgt. Jared R. Krog, Asadabad PRT carpentry and masonry specialist.

"What the Army has trained him to do is what I do every day back home," said McCarty. Krog's



experience was limited to what he learned in advanced individual training, so learning as he completes projects here is something he welcomes.

"I've learned a lot just by watching the way he does things," said Krog. "When he was on leave is when I realized how much I've picked up on. I remembered the way he did certain things, and that's the way I would do it."

It's not the most formal of learning environments — most in Afghanistan aren't — but the engineers are very practical and insightful.

"We're always busy here, so we don't have time to have any kind of formal class or anything," said McCarty. "A couple times a day I'll call him over to show him how to do something, and that's how he's learning."

While McCarty is helping Krog and the local contractors develop their skills in the construction field, he's also helping improve the base itself.

"What we're doing is building the quality of life for the people who will come here after us," he said. "We're trying to make it as nice as we can for anyone who comes out here."



Above: Sgt. Bryan D. McCarty uses a backhoe to dig a hole for a septic tank at the Asadabad PRT. McCarty is responsible for overseeing every construction project at the site.

Top: McCarty shows local contractors a new way to spread mortar while they build a wall at the Asadabad PRT.

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Partnership